From the *Fall Line*

Serving the Counties of King George, Spotsylvania, Stafford & the City of Fredericksburg **Summer 2017**

TRI-COUNTY/CITY SWCD SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Tri-County/City SWCD Sends Local Students to the Summer 2017 Youth Conservation Camp

Wyatt Engel of King George *(left)* and Jonathan Thorne of Stafford *(right)* attended the 2017 Youth Conservation Camp thanks to scholarship funding from Tri-County/City Soil & Water Conservation District. This unique summer camp brings approximately 70 interested students to Virginia Tech's Blacksburg campus for a week immersed in hands-on, outdoor learning about Virginia's natural resources taught by conservation professionals and Virginia Tech faculty.
(Read more about the camp on the next page.)

2017 Youth Conservation Camp
July 9-15, 2017 Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

The week of activities at the Youth Conservation Camp featured a plethora of activities for young naturalists. High school students from across Virginia enjoyed trips, hikes, and demonstrations while learning about agricultural, forestry and aquatic management and conservation practices. Campers explored scenic areas around Blacksburg, VA while swimming in Claytor Lake State Park, hiking to Cascade Falls waterfall, and canoeing on the New River. The stunning views of the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains and Jefferson National Forest were the backdrop for the hands-on learning about the ecology of lakes and streams as well as research techniques to study wildlife and fisheries. Back on the campus of the Virginia Tech, campers visited Virginia Tech Agricultural Farm where they learned about agricultural best management practices including rotational grazing, alternative watering systems, and nutrient management. They also had an opportunity to tour the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences and observe work at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, part of the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine. There was even a little time for volleyball games and independently exploring the grounds of Virginia Tech campus. *(More on the next page ➔)*

Jonathan is holding a fish caught by an electro-shock fishing method, a technique used by the VA Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries to determine the diversity of species in the lake.

Wyatt (far right) and fellow campers try their hand at the animal version of the game "Operation" at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine lab where vet students practice their skills before working on live animals.

2017 Youth Conservation Camp *(continued from previous page)*

"At the Virginia Tech Youth Conservation Camp, my favorite activity was kayaking on the New River. This was my favorite activity because it gave us a chance to explore the river and to learn about safety practices of kayaking and canoeing for the future. I also enjoyed the electro-shock fishing a lot. I enjoyed it because we got to shock the water and let the fish float to the surface and catch them with a net. If I had to rate this camp I would give it a 10/10 because it covers every aspect of nature conservancy in a unique and effective way. I learned more than I could imagine at that camp and would 100% recommend it to anyone."

Jonathan Thorne, North Stafford High School
2017 Youth Conservation Camp participant

"I was fortunate enough to be accepted for a scholarship to the YCC at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and want to thank the Tri-County/City SWCD for sponsoring me. The camp allowed me to explore my field of interest (freshwater ecology) more in depth and exposed me to some opportunities that I have available in this field. My favorite parts of camp were the canoeing on the New River and the water quality testing. Canoeing is just pure fun, and I found the water quality testing interesting. Because of this, I am considering a project dealing with water sampling. Thank you for offering these scholarships. I would recommend this to anyone thinking about a conservation-based career".

Wyatt Engel, King George High School
2017 Youth Conservation Camp participant
(pictured above)

*High school students (grades 9-12) interested in participating in the **2018** Youth Conservation Camp can apply early next spring (March/April 2018). All information, deadlines, and application forms will be available at the beginning of the year. Please contact Izabela Sikora, TCCSWCD Education Coordinator at 540-656-2402 or via email at Izabela.sikora@tccswcd.org*

Youth Conservation Camp is sponsored by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD). Donors this year to Tri-County/City's scholarship fund included White Oak Equipment, Inc., Greenline Service Corp., and Chancellor Ruritan Club's Environment Committee.

Homeowner Highlights By Giannina Frantz

Surviving Drought

Summer is in full swing, which means hot, dry air creates stress on your lawn by depriving it of much-needed moisture. Drought can put a strain on our already short water supply when rainfall is below average and resources are limited. Remember, it is important to conserve water as much as possible to protect ourselves before and during a drought.

Dormancy is a common defense mechanism used by your lawn to combat exposure to extreme temperatures and conditions. Your now brown lawn is naturally reducing water usage and focusing nutrients on its root system. Most lawns tend to go dormant during a drought and will green-up when weather conditions improve. During a drought, there are some simple tips to help you protect your lawn:

- Avoid breaking the natural dormancy cycle of your lawn by not watering heavily. Apply 1/4 to 1/2 inch of water every two to four weeks to maintain moisture in the crown and roots so your lawn can survive and resume growing when conditions improve.
- Don't over mow. By keeping your lawn cut, but taller in the summer (approx. 2.5 to 3 inches), it allows the grass to shade the soil which conserves moisture. Remember to sharpen your lawn mower blades to keep your grass healthy and reduce damage.

A dormant lawn is not a dead lawn; it's just protecting itself from the harsh summer heat.

- Resist applying excess fertilizer during hot, dry conditions which cause the lawn to expend valuable resources being saved during dormancy. Wait until early September for fertilizing most lawns, rather than summer.
- Limit foot traffic on your lawn to prevent further damage during drought. to dormant grass.

Don't Panic!!! Your struggling lawn may give you the best reason for re-landscaping with drought tolerant plants, grasses, and shrubs. Remember the best time to repair your drought damaged lawn is in the Fall.

How Do I Recover My Lawn After a Summer Drought?

Follow these easy steps to help S.A.V.E your lawn after a summer drought:

S.A.V.E. Your Lawn

- **S**mart Watering
- **A**djust Mower Height
- **V**erify Grass Type
- **E**nergy and Nutrients

- Make a plan to recovery! It may take significant resources, time, and energy to bring your lawn back from the brink after a drought. Think carefully and plan for success before investing in your lawn.
- Don't sweat the small stuff! While weeds may take this opportunity to invade your damaged lawn, focus your resources on establishing healthy grass and don't worry about those pesky invaders until next season.
- Dress for success! After a severe drought, your poor grass may be dead, and you may need to start from scratch. Add a top-dressing to your lawn such as compost or a good-quality topsoil to provide a base for new seed to take root. Compost is great because it retains moisture, helps decompose dead grass, and contains nutrients to help grass grow.

- Choose wisely! Pick a drought and disease-resistant grass seed suited for your climate. Spread it evenly on the damaged areas but allow some bare soil to show through. Give the seeds an initial deep watering, and keep them moist but not wet to allow for germination. If you just can't wait to have new grass, consider placing sod. Keep in mind sod is very dependent on water to survive and the soil beneath must stay moist for it to grow new roots.
- Water smarter! Initially, your lawn will need daily watering until your grass seed begins to sprout. Water early in the day when temperatures are cooler to avoid loss through evaporation. Watch the weather for rain to naturally water your lawn and avoid over-watering. Once seeds sprout, water deeply once or twice a week if there is no forecasted rain. And, of course, always remember to conserve water when possible!

Agriculture Update:
Conservation Best Management Practice SL-8B
Small Grain Cover Crop for Nutrient and Residue Management

By Etta Lucas, TCCSWCD Conservation Specialist

This conservation practice is used to establish a vegetative cover of rye, wheat, and barley on cropland. A small grain cover prevents the soil from eroding due to rainfall during the winter and early spring months (October to April), reduces leaching of fertilizer nutrients, and improves soil quality.

Normal commodity crops in our area are corn and soybeans, grown and harvested between April and September each year. For this practice, small grains are then planted in September and early October following the harvest of corn and soybeans. The small grain crops are planted during this time frame to get a good root system in place to hold the soil in place and to use the remaining residual fertilizer in the soil more effectively.

Small grain aerial seeded into unharvested corn crop (Spotsylvania County).

Most sediment removal from cropland between the months of October and April. If the ground surface is left exposed during this critical period, the soil will erode very easily. Soil should be covered at all times to prevent loss of topsoil from fields and to help build soil quality.

This practice is also used to reduce the leaching of residual nutrients from the previous corn or soybeans crop into the groundwater. In the years with low rainfall during the growing season, not all nutrients are used by the previous planted crop, and the residual fertilizer is left in the soil. With heavy rainfall and snow melt during the winter and early spring, the residual nutrients will leach into the groundwater as the water infiltrates down through open pore spaces in the soil. Small grain cover crops trap the excess nutrients. When the cover crop is destroyed, the remaining biomass adds organic matter to the soil, helps the soil tilth, and will make the soil more productive. If you would like to discuss this program or have any questions, please contact Etta Lucas, Conservation Specialist at (540) 656-2402.

NRCS Corner:
Upcoming NRCS Cost-Share Practices Sign-Up
By Lucee Kossler, NRCS District Conservationist

Just a heads up for any producers interested in NRCS financial assistance for FY18…
While we have not been given application deadlines for next year's EQIP applications yet, we have heard through the grapevine that they will be significantly earlier than in years past due to lengthy contracting timelines. If anyone is interested in cropland, livestock, high tunnel, wildlife, or forestry applications, please stop by the office soon so that we can discuss your needs/goals and get applications submitted as quickly as possible. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call Lucee Kossler, NRCS District Conservationist or Matt Roberts, NRCS Soil Conservationist at 540-899-9492 ext. 5.

Meet Our New Soil Conservationist

Please stop by and meet Matt Roberts, the new Soil Conservationist for the Fredericksburg NRCS office. Matt is coming to us from the Wytheville field office, where he has been a Pathways Career Intern with NRCS for the past 4 years. While in Wytheville, Matt worked with many producers on various livestock operations that include grazing and agricultural waste systems. This past December, Matt graduated Virginia Tech with a Bachelors in Crop & Soil Sciences, with a focus in Agronomy and a minor in Environmental Science. He also manages his own beef cow/calf operation in Wythe County where his family lives. He's already proven to be a valuable member of the NRCS team in Fredericksburg and, no doubt, will continue to prove a help for producers in our coverage area.

USDA NRCS
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

TCCSWCD Environmental Education Programs: 2017 Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) Workshops

Thanks to a 2016 -2017 Chesapeake Bay Trust K-12 Environmental Education Mini Grant which TCCSWCD secured, the District was able to expand the year's environmental educational programs to include "Water Education for Teachers" (Project WET) workshops with free books for K-12 teachers in Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George, and the City of Fredericksburg.

The Project WET curriculum is a National Association of Science Teachers-recommended curriculum that provides hands-on activities that can be integrated into teaching about water as a natural resource to include water quality parameters, sources of pollution and ways to prevent them through the introduction of best management practices.

Project WET's mission is to reach children, parents, teachers, and community members of the world with water education that promotes awareness of water and empowers community action to solve complex water issues. www.projectwet.org)

For more information or to schedule a workshop please contact Izabela Sikora at 540-656-2402 or Izabela.sikora@tccswcd.org.

What Did Our Educators Say After a Project WET Workshop?

"Made the concepts easier to teach – in that it was made simpler for students to understand."

"Water has many 'branches' and my lessons should, too."

"The workshop showed me a variety of ways students could interact while learning the water cycle."

"It has raised my awareness as to the extent of water pollution."

"Served as an excellent visual teaching tool"

"Made me want to learn more"

"I got excited about new ways to integrate curriculum."

"The applications of what I knew – great ideas"

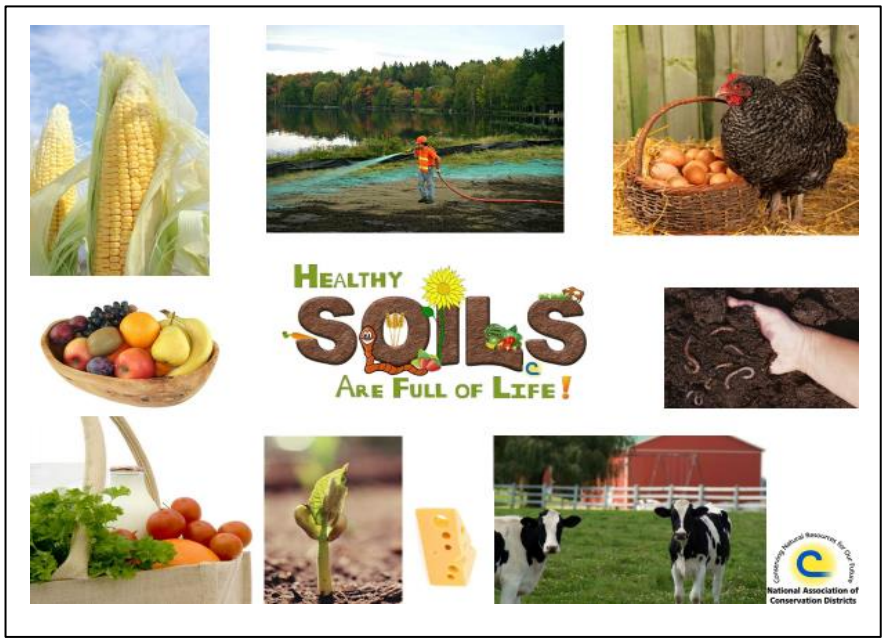
"Made me more aware of my own waste and pollution"

"It added a few more ideas to my tool bag."

"It inspired me to try some simple but meaningful experiences."

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) 2017 Poster Contest

The annual NACD and NACD Auxiliary Poster Contest provides students from Kindergarten through 12th grade the chance to have their art displayed as part of a national conservation outreach initiative. Each year, the winning posters reflect NACD's annual Stewardship Theme, and highlight the work of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries, and agencies to protect and enhance natural resources.



The Stewardship Theme for 2017 Poster Contest is: *Healthy Soils Are Full of Life!*

The contest starts at the district level; winners advance to the state - and then to the national level, where the overall 2017 Poster Contest winner will be announced at the NACD Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN on January 28th, 2018. All other winners will be posted to the NACD website. Monetary prizes will be awarded to the 1st-3rd place winners in each category at the national level: $200 for 1st Place Winners, $150 for 2nd Place Winners, $100 for 3rd Place Winners.

2017 Conservation Poster Contest Official Rules

- **Entries will be judged separately in categories by grade: K-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12.**
- **The contest is open to public, private, or home school students.**
- **Any media *except digital software* may be used to create a flat or two-dimensional effects (paint, crayon, colored pencil, charcoal, stickers, paper, or other materials on regular posters). Poster size must be between 8.5" x 11" and 22" x 28".**
- **The words of the 2017 poster theme, "Healthy Soils Are Full of Life!" must be on your poster. This is the only title eligible for the national poster contest.**
- **Poster submission must include a signed TCCSWCD entry form, which can be found at www.tccswcd.org.**
- **Entries must be received by September 30th, 2017 at Tri-County/City Soil and Water Conservation District at 4811 Carr Drive, Fredericksburg, VA 22408.**

Upcoming Events and Announcements

2017 Well Water Testing Clinic for Planning District-17

How safe is your well water? What is in it?

Where: Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George, and Caroline Virginia Cooperative Extension Offices

When: Sign up August 7–15 8am – 4:40pm

Citizens of Stafford, King George, Spotsylvania, and Caroline can get their well water tested for 14 different parameters that can cause human illness. Simply go to your county's Virginia Cooperative Extension Office during regular business hours, and pick up a well water kit for $55 (normally more than $450 at private labs). Return the well water samples to your extension office on the specified time set by your VCE county office on the morning of August 16, and in about a month later, attend an Interpretational Meeting (time and place to be determined by each office) where the test results will be given and interpreted for you. All results are confidential (at no time will these tests get anyone in any trouble whatsoever.).

For more information, please contact your local Extension agent:

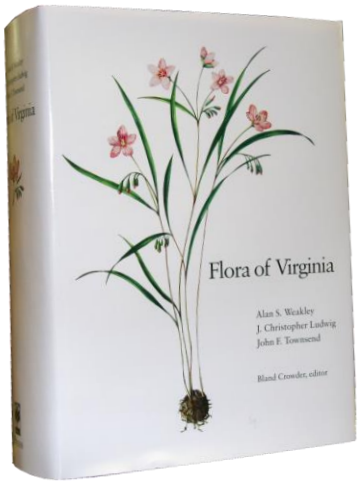
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

- Mike Broaddus for Caroline and King George at (804)-633-6550 or broaddus@vt.edu
- April Payne for Spotsylvania at (540)-507-7570 arpayne@vt.edu
- Guy Mussey for Stafford at (540)-658-8000 gmussey@vt.edu

"Flora of Virginia" Project Exhibit

Where: John Musante Porter Branch of the Central Rappahannock Regional Library
2001 Parkway Blvd., Stafford, VA 22554

When: On display Sept. 18 through Oct. 28, 2017



The Flora of Virginia Project was undertaken in 2001 with a goal of creating the first comprehensive reference work on the native and naturalized plants of Virginia. Published in 2012, the book features 3,164 species, almost 1,600 pages, and 1,400 original illustrations, with keys and excellent habitat information. And now the Library of Virginia's traveling "Flora of Virginia" exhibition is making the rounds across Virginia. It focuses on Virginia plants, from European contact through the present, the representation of plants in science and in art, and the history of botanical exploration in Virginia.

The exhibit will be featured at the Porter Branch of the Central Rappahannock Regional Library between September 18 and October 28, 2017.

The Flora Project's mission is to:

- Inspire conservation of Virginia's native flora through education, outreach, and production of the Flora of Virginia, in print and electronic formats.
- Produce a comprehensive manual of the plants of Virginia. Provide a tool for plant identification and study by professional and avocational users, from academia, government, industry, and the public.
- Incorporate the latest genetics-based information on evolutionary relationships, along with the best traditional taxonomic approaches.
- Increase appreciation of and interest in conservation of Virginia's diverse and unique botanical heritage.

For more information about the project, visit http://floraofvirginia.org/

TCCSWCD Prepares for 2018 Seedling Sale

Taking pre-orders soon!

Next spring seems like a long time away but the TCCSWCD is already busy getting ready for the 2018 Annual Seedling Sale. For the last several decades TCCSWCD has organized an annual sale to the community of low-cost, high-quality bare-root seedlings. Although the sale is not necessarily a big fundraiser, it is a popular activity for us and for our constituents, and it provides the valuable service of making affordable, quality plants more available here locally. All funds that are generated by the sale go to support the TCCSWCD's many educational activities.

At this time of year, we start honing in on which species we will offer for sale based on species' functional benefits, popularity, and availability. This is also when we choose pick-up dates and locations and get everything in order to start taking pre-orders. Even though it seems early since the seedlings won't be ready for pick-up in April, if we don't place our order by mid-November we can't be sure to get the selection we hoped for. Watch your inbox for TCCSWCD's email announcing the sale!

<u>Advantages of Bare-Root Seedlings</u>

In exchange for sticking with the often smaller-sized bare-root seedlings and being ready to plant the seedling once you receive it, you gain a lot of advantages when buying bare-root seedlings instead of seedlings in containers or ball-and-burlap.

- **Cost** - Bare-root seedings generally cost 30-50% less than the same sized containerized seedling.

- **Value -** Not only are they less expensive, you get a lot of value for your money. Bare-roots seedlings typically have more root mass than comparably aged ball-and-burlap seedlings.

- **Easier Handling** - Bare-root seedlings are easier to handle during transport and planting since they don't have the added weight and bulk of soil.

- There is also some evidence that bare-root seedlings get established and grow faster because the seedling can more easily adapt to the new soil it is planted in than a seedling that has been grown and transported in original soil.

We Have Rain Barrels!

Installation of a rain barrel is an excellent way to prevent soil erosion, conserve water and save money. Rain barrels are containers that are connected to your downspouts to capture runoff from the roof. The water collected can provide plants and gardens with water, reduce flooding in your yard, and help protect the Chesapeake Bay.

TCCSWCD sells 50 gal. rain barrels for $75 year-round. Each rain barrel comes with complete instructions and installation kit. Contact the District today to reserve yours!

The EarthMinded™ RainStation™ Rain Barrel connects to your downspout and automatically collects runoff water from your home's roof.

Product features:

- ***A reversible "Planter Top" lid that can be used to grow annuals or herbs on top of the barrel making it both functional and decorative.***
- ***Flexifit™ Diverter automatically passes excess water through the downspout to prevent flooding***
- ***Hole saw included, installs in minutes***
- ***A large opening lid with locking feature for safety***
- ***Sealed system keeps out mosquitoes, pests and sunlight***
- ***Works with standard rectangular downspouts (2 x 3" and 3 x 4")***

http://www.earthmindedconsumerproducts.com/index.html

Did you know?
A single 1" rain storm on a 1,000 square foot results in 600+ gallons of rooftop runoff.

TRI-COUNTY/CITY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTORY

District Directors

Giannina Frantz, ***Chair***	Fredericksburg
Mike Broaddus, ***Vice-Chair***	VA Cooperative Extn
Wayne Miller, ***Secretary***	Spotsylvania
Janet Gayle Harris, ***Treasurer***	King George
Jeff Adams	Stafford
Mike Anderson	Stafford
Steve Cameli	Fredericksburg
Jan Massey	Spotsylvania
Richard Street	At-large
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Gordon Linkous	Fredericksburg
Regina Prunty	King George
John Howe	Stafford
Ray Simms	Spotsylvania

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Marta Perry	District Manager
Etta Lucas	Conservation Specialist
Kim McAfee	Administrative Professional
Izabela Sikora	Education Coordinator

Partner Agencies

Amy Walker, *DCR*	Conservation District Coordinator
Lucia Kossler, *NRCS*	District Conservationist

TCCSWCD maintains a working relationship with each of the following agencies and organizations to reach common conservation goals:

City of Fredericksburg
King George County
Spotsylvania County
Stafford County
USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
USDA – Farm Services Agency
VA Department of Conservation & Recreation
VA Cooperative Extension
Friends of the Rappahannock
VA State Parks
VA Native Plant Society
Tree Fredericksburg
George Washington Regional Council
Potomac River Watershed Roundtable
Rappahannock River Basin Commission
York River & Small Coastal Basins Roundtable
VA Department of Environmental Quality
VA Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
VA Department of Forestry
VA Department of Game & Inland Fisheries
VA Outdoors Foundation
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
VA Association of the Soil & Water Conservation Districts

All programs and services of the Tri-County/City Soil and Water Conservation District are available without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, age, marital status, disability, gender, gender identity, political affiliation or any other basis protected by law.